

Public Questions – 17 April 2024

1. What is economic impact on business, local community, and local economy of council parking charges? High taxes discourage innovation and enterprise. What is value per time parked for longer and shorter periods – to the person parking and to businesses visited – and then to the wider local economy? Analysis shows more parking for shorter periods means more dead time – weblink Q1. Experiment showed public clearly prefer using machines to phone - Q20. No evidence of meter-feeding Lots of places for more bays – best way to make parking easier – Q29. Purley Pool parking inadequate – false analysis.

Response

The appropriate management of parking in our borough is pivotal to ensuring the vibrancy and vitality of our town and district centres.

Parking charges are necessary to ensure there is a turn-over of parking spaces and preventing drivers from parking in spaces long-term, which ensures customers can find parking spaces and support local businesses. Charges are set depending on the demand for parking, with higher charges in areas where parking demand is high.

Shorter term parking is generally located in areas where parking demand is high. For instance, in Croydon Town Centre, most parking bays have a 2-hour maximum stay. This ensures that there is a higher turn-over of parking spaces maximising parking opportunities for new customers, therefore increasing footfall into local businesses. Town Centre car parks are also available for those that require longer parking.

Mobile parking payment is part of what we must do in order to deliver a modernised pay and display service which is fit for the future and provides value for money for residents. It is worth noting that many other Councils up and down the country are now taking similar steps, driven by the fact that 3G – the network which parking meters use to connect back to Council systems – is being phased out nationally by the large phone providers, meaning current parking meters will become obsolete.

Data analysis of parking transactions across the borough shows that roughly 80% of transactions are using the RingGo system, either via the app or on the phone, with only the remaining 20% of transactions being cash and/or card at the Pay and Display machines. This is not a strong enough basis on which to justify investing millions of pounds into new

4G or 5G meters, at a time when we are working hard to get Croydon's finances back on track.

The need to take into account economic impact is part of why we trialled the new parking payment systems so carefully. However, the cashless parking trials across the borough evidenced our anecdotal assumptions of meter feeding in shopping centres and during the trial periods we saw more transactions take place, owing to greater turnover of spaces.

We have additionally proposed a series of changes to parking charges to make them fairer, simpler, and more consistent across the borough, supporting local businesses and making Croydon more accessible for residents and visitors alike.

Finally, whilst I understand your concerns with the Purley Pool development, I am unfortunately unable to comment as it is a live planning application. However, I would encourage you to participate in the live consultation to share your thoughts on the development and ensure it meets the needs of residents.

2. Croydon Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, quickly followed by a Citizens Assembly and appointment of the independent CCCC led by NEF. Covid delayed the commission's work, but a resulting carbon neutral action plan was developed by council, which was finally approved in February 2022. That was 2 years ago, yet we have heard no mention since of the plan and seen little if any progress against it. Are you still committed to the plan, as well as to being carbon neutral by 2030, or not, and how would you rate Croydon's progress against being carbon neutral by 2030?

Response

The Carbon Neutral Action Plan as agreed in 2022 still stands and this is currently being reviewed by a newly-created Carbon Neutral Team.

The team are currently working to review and take stock of the work the Council is doing and the progress against this Plan.

So far this work has involved:

The Planning service revising the Local Plan to align with the carbon reduction requirements outlined in the London Plan and accepting the recommendation of the council's climate change commission;

Our strategic transport team working to deliver initiatives such as our School Streets programme which encourages children and families to walk and cycle to school, as well as plans to improve electric vehicle charging infrastructure in Croydon;

Our pensions team looking at investment strategies for how our pension funds are invested;

The energy team looking at our own energy management;

The economic development team working with London South Bank University (LSBU) on the opening of the new REACT innovation centre, which includes a focus upon research and business support relating to energy and sustainability;

Our fleet team looking at how our vehicles, such as a waste collection trucks, can move towards a non-ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) model;

Our parks and green spaces exploring biodiversity actions; Working with our schools around their energy usage; Looking at the Council's future procurement strategy and the types of contracts we have as a Council and how we use them;

and, the waste and recycling service around improving recycling rates and avoiding landfill. A report is now being prepared which will review the actions undertaken to date in more detail, provide options on how to progress, and set out arrangements on how the council will achieve its objectives.

3. Why are there Homeless people under the Whitgift centre underpass also what is the council doing about getting homeless people into homes.

Response

We are aware that rough sleepers use the Whitgift underpass as a sheltered space to bed-down and that this has been happening for a while now.

May I start by saying that we do look to engage with all rough sleepers in Croydon in order to support them safely off the streets and our outreach teams regularly visits this site.

Croydon, as with all London boroughs, has seen an increase in rough sleeping and we have a developed rough sleeper pathway to actively work with this vulnerable client group.

Our services are currently engaging with approximately 50 new rough sleepers per month and positively more than half of these rough sleepers do not spend a second night out on street due to our interventions to provide safe accommodation.

However, we also recognise that the presence of rough sleepers can feel threatening and that their blocking of sections of this thoroughfare with bedding etc can be unhygienic.

Whilst there have been some occasions when the underpass areas have been deep cleansed, we are actively working on a long-term solution, which will include the closing of the underpass using a portion of the Levelling up funding and the provision of alternative surface level routes across Wellesley Road for pedestrians.

4. What safety measures will be put in place along residential roads like Oaks Road CR8 to prevent fatalities. Already 6 cars have been written off due to speeding. This road is used as a cut through and speeds of up to 60mph are reached at all times of the day. Can bumps be introduced or verges which a bus can still pass through with passing places? This is a school route and is becoming increasingly dangerous to walk to school

Response

As a Council we must prioritise our attention on the roads where we have the highest level of concern. We have thoroughly reviewed the collision data spanning the last 36 months, up to 28 July 2023, which indicates that there have been no reported collisions on Oaks Road during this period. Whilst the absence of collisions is positive, it also informs our next steps. At this juncture, Oaks Road does not fall under the category of priority routes for the Council to address. I'm sorry if this may be disappointing. However, I urge you, and local residents, to remain vigilant and proactive in ensuring road safety. If you witness any collisions or observe dangerous driving or behaviours, please do not hesitate to report them directly to the Police using their online reporting tool available at <https://www.met.police.uk/roadsafelondon/>. It is through these records that we get an accurate picture of areas for concern.

I want to also encourage residents to consider participating in our Community Roadwatch programme. This initiative, conducted in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and Transport for London (TfL), focuses on speed management within residential areas. By joining Community Roadwatch, you can actively contribute to efforts aimed at reducing speeding and enhancing road safety in our neighbourhoods. Participants have the opportunity to work with local police teams, utilising speed detection equipment to identify speeding vehicles in our communities.

As part of our commitment to improving road safety, the Council has decided to cease the installation of road humps on our road network. Instead, we're exploring a variety of other measures designed to promote lower vehicle speeds. These include initiatives such as our SpeedVisor programme, vehicle-activated warning signs, safer speed campaigns and events, as well as driver and rider training programs such as the young driver awareness scheme.

5. It has been revealed that almost 500 children with Special educational/additional needs in Croydon are without a suitable school place. Some of these children have not accessed education for many years despite being issued with legal educational health care plans. What solutions can this Council offer to the families being failed? How can the council ensure it is meeting its legal obligations to some of our most vulnerable residents? What interim support can be put in place until support can be added to the council budget?

Response

There are no children currently without any provision, however we are aware of the numbers of pupils awaiting specialist placements. We acknowledge the very real challenges this brings to these young people and their parents and carers, and are actively working with schools, nurseries, colleges and educational specialists to increase our capacity to meet the diverse needs of our students.

The Council is dedicated to ensuring all children have access to suitable educational environments where they can thrive and progress. Every Local Authority is facing increasing demand in relation to young people with Special Educational Needs and this is a growing national issue. Nonetheless the Council is fully committed to addressing the requirements of children with Special Educational Needs in Croydon who are without suitable school placements.

We understand the urgency of this situation and are actively working on several fronts to provide immediate and long-term solutions. Examples of this include the following:

We have increased capacity within our special schools and have opened an additional Enhanced Learning Provision with two more to open in September. One is specifically designed for children with severe learning difficulties, which is part of our strategy to increase capacity and provide targeted support.

In terms of immediate support, we are also facilitating transition plans for children without specialist placements and those transitioning to mainstream schools, ensuring they have the necessary support in place.

Additional support can be accessed for individual children and young people whose needs cannot be met with the available resources, within their current settings. This is reviewed and allocated through the Escalation and Resolution Protocol process and does support pupils placed in mainstream who require specialist provision.

Portage Groups and home visits are being offered as interim educational measures for children unable to continue in their nursery placements or not in a nursery setting. This initiative has shown positive outcomes, although it is subject to resource availability and planning.

Enhancing our communication and support is also important, so regular communication with parents is a priority, offering them updates and consulting them on best approaches.

Other fronts we are addressing includes support for nurseries and current school placements which is being bolstered to assist children while permanent solutions are sought.

Long-term solutions we are implementing include the opening of three new Enhanced Learning Provisions (ELPs) from September.

Finally, for children currently without placements, home tuition packages are provided as a stopgap, thereby ensuring continuity in education.

6. Will the Cabinet commit to increasing the levels of sanitation across Croydon North, with particular emphasis on the area of Thornton Heath (which includes, but is not limited to, the wards of West Thornton, Bensham Manor and Thornton Heath), by installing more open waste bins on the streets and appointing more sanitation staff to regularly ensure the cleanliness of the high street and, moreover, surrounding residential areas and parks?

Response

Ensuring cleanliness in our borough is an important concern that affects everyone residing or working in the borough. The Executive Mayor I am committed to making our streets and district centres cleaner, so that Croydon can be a place that its residents and businesses can be proud to call home.

One of our top priorities as a Council is to restore pride in our neighbourhoods by fixing the Broken Window effect. To achieve this, we have restored the graffiti removal team and introduced targeted blitz clean-ups in our district centres.

The second targeted intervention is already underway in Thornton Heath, covering the High Street, Brigstock Road and areas of West Thornton, following a successful campaign in Norbury that saw an 84 per cent reduction in fly-tipping in the weeks following the targeted clean up. I am also pleased to report that officers have noted a considerable reduction in graffiti levels subsequently in Norbury.

Graffiti removal will be one of the priorities of this current blitz clean-up in Thornton Heath, which has experienced high levels of graffiti vandalism.

We are also conducting an audit of the current level of litter bins to ensure that there is adequate provision for residents and visitors to dispose of their litter correctly. We have established a monitoring team who will regularly inspect the sites to identify and address any areas of concern regarding the overall cleanliness of the area.

Everyone can play their part by reporting issues such as fly-tipping, graffiti, or overflowing bins via Love Clean Streets. The Council has used data from Love Clean Streets, as well as from residents and during walkabouts, to help identify the areas that will benefit the most from a clean-up. This data will be used to identify future areas for targeted clean-ups.

7. Can the Council provide an up to date figure on both the expenditure of, and the impact on fuel poverty and carbon savings achieved by, Croydon Healthy Homes, and also provide this as an estimate of the £/tonne CO2 saved?

Response

The Croydon Healthy Homes service comprises three full time energy advisors. The cost of providing this service from October 2020 to date is £510k.

So far, the team has provided energy advice and support to around 2,300 residents. This support has ranged from helping residents to secure external grant funding, to helping them to resolve debt issues with suppliers.

The team has helped Croydon residents secure over £2.7m of external grant funding which has been invested in over 500 energy saving schemes in residents' homes across Croydon. These schemes range from the installation of solar panels to the delivery of new and more efficient insulation.

As a result, we will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by around 270 tonnes per year. To date, the team have achieved carbon dioxide reductions at a cost of around £62 per tonne saved.